(e) Extraction and transport of Major Forest Produce by Land and Water.

Departmental system of extracting firewood.

80. The extraction and transport of firewood before 1892 was done by contractors, but in that year the system known locally as the "Departmental" system was introduced, which practically resulted in substituting executive officers in charge of ranges for contractors. The reasons given for the change were that, as middlemen, the contractors were appropriating legitimate profits which ought to accrue to the Department, and that they, as a rule, extracted only a portion of the exploitable material available in the compartments given them for felling and thereby only such forests as were near to the Railway stations or the river were being worked over their capacity while others yielded not the slightest return. The promoters of the new system had the best of motives, it is readily admitted, but unfortunately they forgot that, by making the Range Forest Officers change places with the contractors, they were being turned into or made to act as such. The extraction of the material was to be done within sanctioned rates, and if they failed to obtain labour, or if they incurred any excess expenditure, they were held personally responsible. It came to be recognized, therefore, that the smartest officer and the one most deserving of promotion was the one who could supply a large quantity of fuel to the Railway and other public bodies; it did not matter whether his compartments were evenly felled over or, what is more to the point whether he was getting the work done under the sanctioned rates or not and appropriating the balance.

81. In the absence of reliable maps valuation surveys or other record of any kind showing the nature and constitution of the growing stock, it was impossible for Divisional Forest Officers to select compartments which were to become coupes of the year, and under such circumstances the work of selection fell as a rule on Range Forest Officers, the very men whose prospects depended on the so-called activity they displayed. It is not to be wondered at that they naturally followed in the footsteps of the contractors, and the material continued to be extracted from the most conveniently located compartments as before. Moreover, in Sukkur and Naushahro Divisions principally, they even went a step further. Under the old system, the contractors were compelled to restrict their fellings within certain areas, and when they transgressed the limits the subordinates were prompt in reporting them to their superior officers. But under the "Departmental" system the case was quite different: the woodcutters had only to strike work or refuse to cut in the selected compartments to get more favourably situated ones, because both the Divisional Forest Officers and Range Forest Officers dared not tamper with these men, for if they ran away the Department would not be able to meet its engagements.

82. It is a well known fact that without making large advances it is impossible to get any kind of work done in Sind. The contractors, it was forgotten in condemning the contract system, laid out large sums of money to perform the work satisfactorily. It became necessary, therefore, for the Department to do likewise, as, without a considerable outlay, the executive Forest Officers would not be able to carry out the felling operations of the year. From Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 7,000 had to be advanced at a time to subordinates who had furnished security for Rs. 1,000 only, and whose pay varied from Rs. 20 to Rs. 80. In introducing the new system, it is evident that very little was made of the advance question and great reliance was also placed on the honesty of the men who were to handle such large sums of money. But after it had been working for a year, it was found that Rs. 30,000 were outstanding in one Division alone with hardly any prospect of recovering a greater portion of the amount.

83. In the meantime Act XIII of 1859 (an Act to provide for the punishment of breaches by artificers, workmen and labourers in certain cases) having been applied to Sind, a portion of the debts was recovered under this Act with the greatest difficulty. By giving so much freedom of action and with the help of orders issued to them, I regret to say in contravention of the Forest Department Code, the subordinates considered themselves contractors pure and simple, and when they were able to get the work done at a cheaper

rate in any particular forest they considered themselves justified in spending the savings in another in which they could not carry out the work at the sanctioned rate without accounting for it openly in their books.

84. Under the old system, a considerable amount of friction used always to exist between the contractors and the subordinate officials of the Railway, such as Fuel Inspectors who had the power of rejecting undersized or oversized wood, or that which was of inferior quality. Very often this caused lengthy and acrimonious correspondence between the controlling officers of the two Departments, and as it was considered that the friction was likely to increase under the "Departmental" system, a European contractor, who was styled Superintendent of Fuel Supply, was employed to receive stock and hand over the fuel to the Railway at different stations. It is true that hardly any disputes arose during the term of his contract with the Railway, but litigation of a very serious character originated in another direction in which the Divisional Forest Officers were the sole arbitrators. Having to deal with a large body of men, there were bound to be disagreements, and enquiries after enquiries, however trivial, had to be held to settle the differences between the subordinates and the work-people. The powers with which the Superintendent of Fuel Supply was invested also seem incredible, as it was practically in his hands to ruin a subordinate by simply rejecting a large consignment on insufficient grounds or "packing" the woods of another. The consequence was that they had to find ways and means to work harmoniously with the Fuel Supply establishment.

85. It will be gathered from the above remarks that, while material continued to be extracted much in the same way under both the systems, the monetary risk and utter demoralization of the subordinate service involved under the new one were simply scandalous. The magnitude of the former will be made clearer by the figures shown in the following statement:—

Division.	Advances outstanding on 1st October 1894.	Disbursements made during the fuel year, 1894-95 (October 1894 to September 1895).	Total of columns II and III.	Recoveries made during the year.	Balance of outstandings on 30th September 1895.
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Sukkur	23,790	27,443	51,233	40,927	10,306
Naushahro	14,183	37,551	51,734	45,169	6,565
Hyderabad	23,373	53,268	76,641	66,172	10,469
Jerruck	25,801	29,396	55,197	37,414	17,783
Total ...	87,147	1,47,658	2,34,805	1,89,682	45,123

86. I am not yet prepared to say how much of the outstanding advances will be irrecoverable, as, owing to certain recent decisions of the Sadar Court, reversing the orders passed by Magistrates under Act XIII of 1859 (an Act to provide for the punishment of breaches of contract by artificers, workmen and labourers in certain cases,) some of the claims will have to be dragged into a Civil Court before they are settled. The other advantage and the chief one I believe—that of economy in working—is not, therefore, apparent. The bad debts arising from the irrecoverable advances as well as expenditure which yielded no return, such as that of the wood either swept away or embedded in silt or that which was lost from eroding banks, will more than counterbalance the anticipated saving of Rs. 17,000 annually in the working changes.

87. As to the evil effects on the Protective Staff of such a lax system of working, under which the subordinates were not called upon to account in their books for every pie of the funds placed at their disposal, it is evident that not a single man amongst them failed to misappropriate a part of the money passing through his hands. Another indirect result of the new system was the impracticability of transferring subordinates as often as the exigencies of the

service required. The advance accounts having been allowed to run up during the incumbency of one Range Forest Officer, it was found difficult for another to collect his predecessor's outstandings, and consequently the Divisional Forest Officers had, much beyond their will, to keep a man in one place however untrustworthy or incompetent he might be.

88. Such was the state of things I found on taking over charge of the Sind Circle on 29th October 1894, and as the evils of the "Departmental" system were brought to my notice one by one, I took the necessary steps to remedy them.

89. In the Sukkur Division, the extraction and delivery of the fuel from specified compartments to the North-Western Railway and other public bodies were effected through the agency of contractors, but in the two central divisions, Hyderabad and Naushahro, the forests continued to be worked on the "Departmental" system for the simple reason that I was not able to find contractors to undertake the felling as well as delivering operations so late in the season. But the unlimited powers of making advances to Range Forest Officers were, it need not be said, largely restricted, as well as all existing orders that were in contravention of the Forest Department Code cancelled. In the working of the forests of the Jerruck Division, important modifications were carried out just before my arrival which it was not deemed necessary to disturb. As a rule, departmental agency only was employed for felling timber and firewood as well as for manufacturing charcoal, and the transport and subsequent delivery to most of the public departments or to the timber markets were left to contractors to carry out who bore all the expenses in connection therewith. The object of this arrangement was twofold. Firstly, only a portion of the working charges were debited against the Department, and thereby reduced the percentage of expenditure over receipts; and secondly, the material having been sold and made over to the contractors in the forests, there was no further risk.

(f) Exploitation of Minor Forest Produce.

(1) Extraction of Fodder.

Extraction of fodder.

90. The extraction of fodder is quite an insignificant feature in the working of the forests of the Sind Circle. Villagers are generally allowed to remove grass from the open forests free of charge when they require it for stall feeding their animals.

(2) Grazing.

Grazing.

91. In all open forests, grazing is allowed on payment of fees, which are collected by Forest subordinates. The scale of fees laid down under the authority of Government Resolution No. 7277 of 13th October 1886, and which is now strictly enforced, is as under:—

Kind of Animal.	Per month.		
	Maximum scale or 1st class fee.	2nd class fee.	Minimum scale or 3rd class fee.
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Camel	0 4 0	0 4 0	0 4 0
Buffalo	0 3 0	0 1 6	0 1 0
Horse	0 1 6	0 0 9	0 0 3
Cow or bullock	0 1 6	0 0 9	0 0 3
Donkey	0 1 0	0 0 6	0 0 3
Goat	0 0 3	0 0 3	0 0 3
Sheep	0 0 3	0 0 2	0 0 1